

Testimony before the Housing Committee

March 8, 2012

In support of SB190

Barbara Albert

Good morning members of the Housing Committee, also everyone else. My name is Barbara Albert, registered voter, renter in Hartford, multiply medically challenged, including mental illnesses. I'm on Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security Disability. I was employable before illnesses became too much. I do volunteer work when able. I am also an activist and advocate for Human Rights, mostly for mental health rights and rights for the disadvantaged no matter what age.

Illness and poverty do not discriminate. According to the Brookings Institute, I am one of more than 30% of Hartford residents "living" under the Federal Poverty Level according to the U.S. Dept of Housing and Urban Development 2012 Fiscal Year Program. I am one of several million very low-income American renters with "worst case needs", meaning that I am paying more than 50% of my income for rent and living in severely inadequate housing. The 2010 Census reports Hartford as the poorest city in the richest state. I apply for rental assistance whenever there is an opportunity. Still nothing.

This is my testimony in support of ***Raised Bill No. 190, An Act Concerning the Rights and Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants Regarding Bed Bug Infestation.***

Last session, I submitted a "Stephen King" type testimony to the Public Health Committee concerning bed bug infestation since at least 2009, where I've been renting since 1995. My apartment/building has significant problems with bedbugs. I have needed to notify the landlord on several occasions. A few times the response from the office that I received was "are you sure they are bed bugs", and "do you want to wait until there are more?" I hesitated before answering because each time the apartment is sprayed, and I vacate for more than the requested time, I become more and more ill due to the chemicals. I have **Multiple Chemical Sensitivities** and this very much has been increasingly detrimental to my health. I've paid my rent into Housing Court to attempt compliance from the landlord's with our lease/contract only to see the landlord get the rent anyway. I put a petition together with as many other tenants' signatures to request compliance. I've got Doctor's letters and a serious medical history with allergies and sensitivities documented.

I support bill 190 and most of the wording. I know landlords who don't follow current municipal codes. How can I be sure that these landlords will follow this law? I see myself trapped here and dying. What are people like me supposed to do? I'm still dropping things and feel like I have scramble eggs for brains since the last extermination on Dec 9, 2011.

With my testimony is a description of Multiple Chemical Sensitivities, a doctor's letter, (a copy is with my landlord) and a Center for Disease Control report with my symptoms circled. I don't know what to do.

"Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds the criticisms made on the habits of the poor, by most of the well housed, well-warmed, and well-fed." Herman Melville

And why isn't there some creature in the food chain that eats these little blood suckers?

Thank you for listening.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Albert